

Now Valentina has a new liver

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Thanks to the enormous generosity of many people, mainly from Varese, now Valentina can hope. **In two weeks, “ Il Ponte del Sorriso” organization collected more than € 110,000.** This news was spread by Emanuela Crivellaro who also thanks the press who supported the campaign to collect the funds for the liver transplant of the child from Varese. The possibility for Valentina to have a peaceful life in the future is more and more concrete. **The liver transplant**, essential and urgent for her because of the Wilson disease with which she was afflicted, **took place at the beginning of last Sunday**, thanks also to the synergy and to the collaboration among Regione Lombardia, North Italian Transplant program (NITp) and the National Transplant Centre. Indeed, on Saturday afternoon, an alert arrived of an available organ donation from a dead person in a hospital in another part of the country. In these cases, **an unexpected tragic event for a family can mean a rebirth for other people** waiting for an organ, through the biggest gift that a man can do to another man. Immediately, the operations started; checks, authorizations, the surgeon, Domenico Pinelli, at the Papa Giovanni XXIII Hospital, starts with a blood sample, after the compatibility of little Valentina, who was preparing for the surgery, was verified.

The transplant, done with the split technique, started in the morning of 3 November at 6 A.M. and ended at 1 P.M. . In the operating theatre there were the surgeons, Michele Colledan and Michela Guizzetti, the anesthetists Davide Corbella and Magda Khotcholava, and the healthcare assistants Nadia Magri, Guido Villa and Adelaide Ravasio. At the same time, in the operating theatre at the Papa Giovanni XXIII Hospital, another liver transplant was done, this time on an adult patient, demonstrating the technical and organizational abilities of the hospital in Bergamo. **Valentina is still in intensive care, but the convalescence is regular.** It was a real race against time for the “ Ponte del Sorriso Onlus” to take Valentina to Italy. In a few days after her arriving, thanks to the interface work between the Transplant Coordination of the Papa Giovanni XIII Hospital and the National Transplant Network, Valentina was added to the national transplant waiting list, with urgency, because she was afflicted with fulminating hepatopathy. Only three weeks passed from when the child was hospitalized in Albania and was diagnosed with this serious pathology, to the moment when the surgical intervention was done in Bergamo.

The hospital in Bergamo, among the most operative in the pediatric liver transplant in Europe, with the permission of the Regione Lombardia, regularly does liver transplants on foreign children, after having verified the impossibility of this kind of surgery intervention in the motherland and the ability of the country itself to take care of the patient from their return to

home to a year later. Then other conditions are set up, like the financial backing of the surgery intervention and the protection of the Italian citizens, to whom the absence of conflict with the foreign patients who are waiting for the same type of organ and have the same characteristics (blood group, weight, age, etc.), is assured.

The frequent use of split technique, which permits to obtain two autonomous parts from a liver, transplantable in two different subjects, has pretty much eliminated the wait for a transplant of paediatric liver, making difficult, if not impossible, the chance of quarrels among foreigners and Italian children. This is not the only thing. Transplant information and the organs donated to Italy are all planned on different levels (provincial, regional and national) and this means that this activity can be managed properly, with equity and justice, and it is not a small thing. So, in Italy, because of the free and anonymous donations, the clandestine paid trade of organs does not exist. The "National Transplant Network" guarantees this.

When Valentina's parents saw her after the operation, they broke down and cried, keeping on thanking. They were incredulous in facing the results, because when the disease was discovered it seemed impossible to be treated because of bureaucratic and economic barriers, which are hard to tear down, in Italy and Albany's healthcare.

The parents did not have the economic resources to save their daughter. A tragedy which first turned into hope and then in reality, thanks to the generosity of a great number of benefactors.

More than 600 people answered to the call of the organisation "Ponte del Sorriso Onlus", and thanks to them, €110,000 were collected to contribute to the payment of the operation. Behind these donations, there are a lot of good stories, such as the one of the two newlyweds who chose the life of Valentina over the traditional gifts as their anniversary present.

The advance payment of 30% has already been paid for, as well as for one year of treatments and anti-rejections therapies. But €40,000 are still necessary to cover the costs of convalescence to complete the little girl's recovery.

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